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MCGUINTY GOVERNMENT INVESTING IN BETTER ACCESS TO SERVICES FOR SENIORS IN THUNDER BAY

New Centre of Excellence for Seniors will create more than 100 new jobs

THUNDER BAY - The McGuinty government is establishing the Centre of Excellence for Integrated Senior's Services (CEISS) in Thunder Bay to house 336 new long term care beds and 132 new supportive housing units, Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman announced today.

"We need to offer more choices to seniors that will promote their independence, so they can continue to live with dignity and respect." said Smitherman. "This project represents a new option for seniors that will better respond to their needs, so they can remain in the community."

The Centre of Excellence for Integrated Senior's Services will respond to the local populations' increasing demand for senior's care services. This opportunity developed following a decision by the City of Thunder Bay to return 300 municipally run long-term care beds to the province in January 2009. The estimated $56.6 million project will result in an additional 107 full time jobs. The facility will be built at St. Joseph's Care Group's Hogarth Riverview Manor site and will accommodate the following:

- 336 new long term care beds including 64 specialized behavioral beds to serve the North West region;
- 132 new supportive housing units;
- Community support services for an additional 150 clients ;
- Enhanced services for existing supportive housing units.

Construction is scheduled to begin in fall 2008 and be completed in 2010.

"As a former city councillor who was involved in this issue, I am thrilled with the commitment by our government today to provide certainty and security to our seniors that want to continue to call Thunder Bay home," said MPP Bill Mauro. "The new supportive housing piece will be a great addition to our health care community and shows once again, with the creation of over 100 new jobs, how investments in health care and education are also good for our economy. We are creating a centre of excellence in health care in Thunder Bay and it is very exciting to be part of this."

"This is extraordinarily good news for everyone concerned about the provision and protection of our long term care beds in Thunder Bay," said Michael Gravelle, MPP for Thunder Bay - Superior North. "The addition of much needed supportive housing units to this announcement is also extremely welcome. This has been a long time in the making and we must thank everyone involved in making this happen, particularly St. Joseph's Care Group, Minister Smitherman and the C.A.W. for their belief in this exciting and necessary project."

"We are delighted by the government's actions to expand LTC care beds in Thunder Bay," said John Whitfield, Chair of the North West Local Health Integration Network. "This investment will increase our delivery of senior's services to allow for better LTC options and an increased opportunity for people to age at home."

This is just one more example of how, working together, Ontarians have achieved results in health care services in Thunder Bay. Other initiatives include:

- Creating the first Northern Ontario School of Medicine in 2004
- Providing $636,000 to increase access to emergency services for angioplasty patients in Northwestern Ontario
- Developing 12 Family Health Teams in the North West LHIN who provide care to over 50,000 patients, 4,753 of whom previously did not have a family doctor.

Today's initiative is part of the McGuinty government's plan for innovation in public health care, building a system that delivers on three priorities – keeping Ontarians healthy, reducing wait times and providing better access to doctors and nurses.

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Media Contacts:

Jeff Rohrer
Minister's Office
416-326-8016

David Jensen
Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
416-314-6197

Members of the general public: 1-866-532-3161

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